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THE MIDWEST'S SHORT TRACK AUTO RACING AUTHORITY

November 2015



The Best from the Midwest



Inside...



Shenanigans



John Gilbertson

Exclusive Interview with the New Knight



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Publisher's Note

Racing According to Plan



Dan Plan

If you have ever seen an asphalt short track race in the South, in person or from an online video, you may have noticed the leader typically isn't very safe with a few laps to go. This guy I know (he didn't want me to use his name, but he takes really cool pictures and makes awesome videos) was the first one I heard use the phrase "Racin' in the South." It's a little different than what we are accustomed to seeing here in the upper Midwest.

The 200-lap main event at Oktoberfest, and specifically the last ten laps of the race, was a perfect example of Racin' in the North. Had this race taken place south of the Mason-Dixon line, I think we might still be there watching it. In my mind, if the 'Fest 200-lap race transpired in the South, the leaders would have simply run over each other when their motors vapor locked. There would have been a lengthy cleanup, followed by another restart, and then the new drivers in first and second place would have dumped each other. This cycle would repeat itself until there were less than dozen cars left on the track and darkness settling in.

Racin' in the North



Doug Hornickel photo

Fredrickson picked up another Oktoberfest title to close out the 2015 season

Those of us on hand at Oktoberfest saw Danny Fredrickson dart around Ty Majeski when Majeski's motor stumbled and move into the lead. Unfortunately, Fredrickson then had his motor stumble, allowing Jacob Goede to get a shot at the lead. A phenomenal race, with a little bit of "rubbin'" amongst some great drivers. All drivers running with 10 to go were able to drive their cars to the checkered flag. That's the kind of short track racing I like. Sure, torn up race cars get everybody talking, but a good side-by-side race sure seems better for everyone involved in the long run.

Now the other great thing about the 200-lap Oktoberfest feature was the way pit stops were handled. The format used this year, allowed for teams to pit under caution without losing a lap. The beauty of this type of setup is we still get to see live pit stops, without the teams having the added expense of high priced pit equipment or spending tons of money on flying in an over the wall team from a Cup, Xfinity or Truck team. It's definitely a win-win for fans and racers.

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Racing According to Plan from page 3

Miscellaneous news & Notes:

Early in the month of October, we had our first visit to Dodge County Speedway in Kasson, MN. The track has been through some troubled times in the past years, but it was good to see another show at this historic fairgrounds facility. I've mentioned this before, but there's just something special about seeing a race from a covered grandstand at a county fairgrounds. Hopefully they can schedule a few more shows for the 2016 season.

When it comes to the media aspect of going to the races, I'm really more of a race fan than a member of the media. I'm not looking for the next "big scoop" or "breaking news". I'm just out to see a good race, write about what I see, and hopefully encourage more people to enjoy the great sport of short track racing. As a person born and raised in the gopher state, I can't help but root for the Minnesota drivers at races such as the National Short Track Championships or Oktoberfest. It's always a big deal to win a race at NSTC or Oktoberfest. Last chance qualifier, heat race or main event are all proud moments for the drivers.

So as a race fan from Minnesota, congrats to all of the Minnesota race winners at Rockford for the National Short Track Championships and Lacrosse during Oktoberfest.

The 2015 version of Oktoberfest might as well been named "Majeskifest". The kid won five of the ten feature races entered and had a worst finish of 9th in feature race action. If you average up his feature race finishes over the ten events, it comes out to 2.5. Not a bad weekend. The drivers winning the other Late Model features over the course of the weekend were; Dan Fredrickson (ARCA Midwest Tour), Cole Anderson (JMCK 63 segment 2), Casey Johnson (Big



*The Topless Nationals at Ogilvie Raceway gets bigger every year
(Shawn Swanstrom photo)*

8) Colin Reffner (Trickle 99 segment 3) and Brad Keith (Futures race).

And finally, we wrapped up or 2015 season with a visit to the 5th Annual Topless Nationals at Ogilvie Raceway. This show continues to grow each year, with almost 200 cars on hand. What was supposed to be a two-day show was condensed into a single day event after rain all day on Friday. Definitely a lot of racing on tap this night and a great way to wind down the season.



*Pit stop action during the 2015 running of Oktoberfest
(Doug Hornickel photo)*

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The Best of 'Fest

Each year there are different items that are part of Oktoberfest outside of the racing that we find quite entertaining. The Marshall kids had this exact replica of the speedway setup outside their camper (left photo) and the return of the Sunday morning autograph session appears to have been a success (right photo)



Dan Plan photos



Going in Circles



Charlie Spry

Rockford Speedway's National Short Track Championships celebrated its 50th anniversary, which is truly a special thing. It was the first major post season show at a time when the racing season in the Midwest was usually completed with the end of the regular season in early September.

Many of the competitors during this show in 2015 were not even around in 1966 for the first one. As I child I didn't attend my first race until 1968, and first remember the 1971 edition. It wasn't until the later 1970's that I became a regular attendee. Some of the divisions have changed over the years, but one thing remains the same, the Derry family hospitality towards the fans, drivers, crews and media, and as they say, "One Great Racing Weekend."

Friday nights edition featured the Great Northern Sportsman series, with a rough and tumble battle up front between Chris Weber and Dave Trute. Michael Gilomen took advantage of the pair being relegated to



Mark Melchiori photo

the back and took the big win, while Trute drove back to finish second, but all for naught, as he scaled in light at the end of the race. Minnesota drivers showed their stuff in this race, with Dusty Mann finishing second ultimately. Dusty has one great racing name!

Chargin' Charlie Frisch capped off a truly stellar season in the bandit division, winning the feature in the Hornet/Bandit challenge, while Heather Stark was crowned the women's champion. Dennis Smith Jr. also capped off a great season for him by winning the Roadrunner NSTC feature.

Kelly Evink looked to be dominant in the American Short Tracker feature, seemingly checking out on the field and dominating just like he did in the late stages of the regular season here this year. But wait, George Sparkman knows a thing or two about getting around this track and tracked him down, filling Evink's mirror at the end. Evink took the win as Sparkman didn't push the issue too hard and took home second rather than chancing a spin on the leader and himself both. Smart driving in this division.

Saturday brought us overcast skies with a strong wind blowing, but everything went on as planned. Michael Bilderback showed his strength, just as he did in the later stages of the regular season, as he set fast time and drove off to a convincing win in that divisions feature event. Casey Johnson scored second with Alex Papini third. No surprises to any of that. Nice to see J. Herbst run strong and finish fourth. He has run here in the past and not had much success, but tonight he was racing like a man possessed! He moved through the pack to challenge the frontrunners, and looked to have the strongest car at the end, save for Bilderback.



Jimmy Ambruoso photo

One of the vintage racers put on his own show, as he rode the turn 1-2 wall, nearly going over. He kept the car righted, and even drove off, and if not for the officials rightfully black flagging him, looked like he wanted to keep on racing! Matt Ramer took the vintage win, while Patrick Bruns won the Illini midget feature, and Ryan Gutknecht won the Mid-Am headliner. No

sooner had the final flag flown on Saturday night, and a light mist fell on the speedway. Actually, I think it was misting just a bit before that even.

Kudos go out to Mike Taylor and Taylor racing. This team races at every track they can get to throughout the season, and always show up at as many post season shows as possible. I don't think they get enough credit for doing this. So here it is!

Sunday dawned once again with overcast skies, as a light rain fell during the morning hours, delaying things just a bit. Once again, the show went on. The super late model 200 lap headliner had trouble getting going, but once it did, it lived up to and beyond the expectations of most. Steve Rubeck looked to have things his way, but then Jon Reynolds Jr. showed more muscle and took over. Casey Johnson had some misfortune, as he slid into the wall backwards along with another car, relegating him to the back of the pack. His car had a "spoiler" of sorts, as the rear bodywork was jacked way up on the car, giving it a disheveled appearance. It was fun to watch him move back through the pack, which he did, finding himself glued to Reynolds' bumper. In the end, it was the big win for Reynolds in the X car, by about a fender. It was old school, fender bumping, blocking and tire rubbing racing, with both drivers alluding to how much fun it all was. If that isn't a fitting end to the 50th anniversary NSTC, I don't know what is! Also of note was James Swan's drive from deep in the pack to finish fourth. James didn't even make the show other than by a provisional, so he started way back, but with smart driving, he made it up to the front pack.

The sprint cars were back once again, with Brian Gerster taking the win, thanking the largely stock car populace for their hospitality. I think the show they put on has made some real fans of the stock car fans. The speed and raw power is phenomenal!

Chester Ace took the win in the American Ethanol Super Truck feature, and with it, their championship. He edged out Camden Murphy for the win and the title.

Young Zach Tinkle won the super cups feature, as they put on an exhibition race. Zach may have put

*Going In Circles
continued on page 7*



Jimmy Ambruoso photo

Going In Circles continued from page 6

some of the other drivers to shame, as he talked a blue streak in the post-race interview, listing all who have helped and his sponsors. I'd guess he might have practiced this a time or two, because he had it down pat! All in all, we could have hoped for a little nicer weather, but the racing was great, and that is what you hope to see. Here's to fifty more of these!

On to the Oktoberfest racing weekend at LaCrosse, I was only able to attend the races for one night, on Saturday. It was still enough to get a feel for the enormity and importance of this event. J. Herbst has been running strong in the Big 8 events this year, and you would figure on him being in the mix for the win at his "home" track, and he was. He had a tough job in holding off Casey Johnson and Michael Bilderback. Johnson is always fast, and Bilderback had an absolute rocket the latter part of the year. Herbst did a nice job in holding the others off for his win, however, his car failed the post-race inspection, giving the win to Johnson. Bilderback only had to finish in twenty-first or better position to take the Big 8 title, and he had no problem doing so. He had his difficulties and share of bad luck throughout the year, but he and his team got through all of it to take home the title.



The Big 8 finale at Oktobfest had the top 3 running nose to tail

The best race of the night came down to the wire in the "Dash" series for modified four cylinder cars. Kevin Eckes and Kyle Stark both went into the wall, with Phil Malouf becoming the benefactor, inheriting the lead. George Sparkman and Adam Krzykowski were right there, Sparkman hounding Malouf for several laps, and Krzykowski moving in quickly, with a three-wide sprint down the front straight for the win,



The Midwest Dash Series was 3-wide at the line at Oktoberfest

with Malouf winning by inches in an excellent race by these three. Couldn't ask for any better race!

Local driver Brian Back doesn't make too many starts in the Mid-American series, but when he does, he runs well. He did just that tonight, moving through the pack to take a dominating victory over Jeff Holtz, who took home the series title.

There are always so many things to do and people to talk with that you can't really get it all soaked in on one night, but I did my best!

Next up was one of my long standing favorites, the Bahama Bracket nationals at the Rockford Speedway. Always a great time to see such a wide variety of racing vehicles compete against one another, with drivers from various tracks and even different racing surfaces all competing against one another.

Many of the bracket winners were quite emotional and very happy to get their wins. Dan Church drove a modified racer to the win in the "A" bracket, stating that he was happy to get the win over his good friend, James Swan, while Rick Coppernoll won the "AA" bracket, stating that he last won a race here back in 1984. Iowa racer Bob Ahrendson won the "AAA" bracket, and was overwhelmed in victory lane, stating that he felt very much

blessed and fortunate to get the win, after years of trying, and Dennis Smith Jr. took the win in the "AAAA" bracket, racing in a tight bracket with many regular Rockford Roadrunner division drivers, which always put on a great show.

A few years ago the four cylinder cars were added to this show, and have grown in car counts ever since. Kyle Stark took the win over some very tough competition in the "B" bracket, while Kyle Royster did the same in the "BB" bracket.

Don Ciano ran his first races in a full size car in nineteen years, driving Ricky Sanwick's #78 Buick. Don did something that you would figure someone would do in his situation, and that is get much faster throughout the weekend. In this show, you get black flagged and "break out" of your bracket if you



*Danny Church picked up a win at the Bahama's
Jimmy Ambruoso photo*

race 2/10ths faster than your qualifying time (and get caught), and of course, Don got much faster every time out and had this happen.

One of my favorites at the brackets is Sycamore Speedway dirt track racer Danny Deutsch, who races a dirt super late model at this event yearly. Danny wowed the crowd with his wheel off the ground style of dirt racing on the pavement, and was dubbed "The next American folk hero" by announcer Eric Huenefeld. Danny and his whole crew/family are really great people, and I enjoy talking to them every year, and Danny is a talented driver who always does a backflip off the car when he wins a race. Good to see so many cars from Sycamore racing here.

Josh Thiering had an interesting story on a car that he raced this weekend. His car is a former Chad Stevens racer that had sat for many years. "The nearest we can figure, is that the car had not been raced for about nineteen years," Said Josh. "We had to do quite a bit of cleaning and painting and just plain old work on it to get it back out, and we think it will do real well, but we have a problem where it is throwing (engine) belts off and overheating. We had it out earlier in the week and it did this, then we tried to fix it, then it did it again in practice last night. We just keep trying things that is all we can do." Josh won a qualifying race with no issues, but then the problem appeared to rear its ugly head again in the feature, as he was running in the lead pack of cars and overheated once again.

Rodger Stephenson was present once again. "I've run most of these shows, and had mixed results," Said Rodger. "One time I was leading the race with only about five laps to go and broke a rocker arm, and another time I got spun out late in the race. I've also won a couple of them, however." Rodger was racing Brandon Delacy's hobby stock car, while Brandon wheeled his four cylinder racer in the "B" bracket.

So many drivers race in this event every year that it is hard to recognize them all here, but some of them include Billy Bob Wiltjer, Shaun Wiltjer, Mike Loughren, Eddie Wolf, Bill Serviss, Scott Gardner, Ed Hast, and so many more. All are very much appreciated!





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Dale P. Danielski

There are any number of storylines that develop during the annual Oktoberfest racing weekend at La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway, West Salem, WI., and with this the 46th running of the event held October 8-11, 2015 that was again the case.

Ty Majeski who's been the driver to beat everywhere the last couple seasons was one such storyline as he competed every night in one division or another and came close to winning them all! It started out with Thursdays NASCAR Late Model Division race card, the final event for the regular Saturday night at the speedway group and where Majeski has been a part time competitor this year. A fast time honor boded well for the Majeski night and that's pretty much how it went as Ty quite easily won the 40 lap Feature outdistancing 2015 track champion Steve Carlson. The Futures Feature event for Super Late Model race cars was another race Majeski was eligible to compete in and after getting bogged down early in the pack he wound up a disappointing 9th. Things were destined to

get better for Majeski and they did in a hurry heading into the next nights racing events.

On this night Majeski was competing in what arguably is one of the most popular and prestigious events of the entire weekend, the Dick Trickle 99. Run in three 33 lap segments Majeski showed from the outset he had the car to beat by qualifying fastest among the 60 entries. Starting on the pole for the 1st Feature as per race procedures Majeski proceeded to run away from everyone in winning the segment. The 2nd segment proved much more difficult as Majeski was forced to start 15th on the field. Working his way to the front, Majeski again made it look easy taking the lead from Andrew Morrissey and cruising to another convincing win. Now discussion turned to what had never been done before, winning all three segments of the Dick Trickle Memorial event. If Majeski could pull this historic feat off it would be worth an additional \$999.99 from the track over the regular paid purse. Starting 12th in the main most thought it was practically a given, however another young driver who was in the midst of a terrible race season had other ideas as Collin Reffner, grandson to three time 'Fest winner, Tom Reffner took the lead from the outset and never looked back. Without the aid of a caution Majeski ran out of time to run him down finishing 3rd in the Feature. Third place in the finale meant first place in the over all standings and Majeski was declared winner of this years Trickle 99 event.

A Majeski hunch in deciding to race in the Big 8 Series events on Saturday as he felt he had a car that would run well on the 8 inch treaded tires the series requires, proved to be a good one as he started the evening by setting the fastest time among the 45 entrants. At 68 laps the main event was the next thing to conquer and after rapidly moving up into the top 5 Majeski again appeared to have the car to beat. With J. Herbst leading the whole way from the pole position

(this as it turned out is another one of those 'Fest storylines) Majeski began mixing it up with Michael Bilderback and Casey Johnson. Battling tooth and nail, side by side and nose to tail for the balance of the race Majeski could never quite find the room to pass the duo settling for 4th

at the finish, which actually ended up being third after the disqualification of race long leader J. Herbst!

The Herbst storyline was having never won a Big 8 Series feature and being on a mission to win one for his Mother who had passed away the previous month. His Mom, his biggest fan, was all the motivation J. needed to lead the field home in the 68 lap main event. The win one for Mom and all the emotions that went with the huge win, sadly came to a heartbreaking end as Herbst's carburetor was deemed to have been tampered with resulting in the win being taken away and a last place finish the result. Manufacturer defect? Engine builder issue? Race team at fault? A moot point, and sadly Moms Big 8 Series win will have to wait.

The Majeski storyline continued with his hope of



Mark Melchiori photo

capping off the weekend's racing by winning the 200 lap ARCA Midwest Tour season finale. Having set the fastest qualifying time for the Tour the night before, for all practical purposes it appeared Majeski would accomplish this. Storylines and dominating events don't always have happy endings however and Majeski found that out on Sunday as having led the bulk of the race and appearing to have things in control with just 10 laps left, an engine sputter on a late race restart saw both Dan Fredrickson and Jacob Goede motor by with the cagey veteran Fredrickson the happy recipient of his 4th 'Fest main event win. For Majeski it was a "What just happened moment", and the end of a truly remarkable weekend of racing. At 20 years of age Majeski certainly has time to win this event and who knows, come next year he may again be an Oktoberfest Racing Weekend storyline.

Mark Bornitz had a storyline of his own heading into Oktoberfest. Having won the Hornet Division track championship last year it was either move up a division or sit out a season at the Lax Speedway. Bornitz chose to sit out and it ended up being the right decision as he won big races during the year on the dirt and

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Bruce Nuttleman photo



Racing Observations from page 9

capped the year off by winning the Bandit Division feature on Thursday night of "Fest!"

Keeping everything hush, hush for a great while vintage racer John Gilbertson became a storyline during 'Fest as well. John won the Vintage feature a year ago in an AMC Javelin and planned to race the car again in that race in 2015. The difference this year was in the cars' appearance, as it had a near identical paint scheme to the Javelin Tom Reffner drove to 67 feature wins in 1975! With plenty of old-timers on hand at 'Fest there was no shortage of Oohs and Ahs coming from the many that remembered the car from back in the day. Tom Reffner himself was on hand during the weekend and broke into a big smile upon seeing the #88 Javelin. It had to have brought back many great memories of Tom's greatest successes in racing from that year.

Mike Miller was a storyline three years in the making. Miller of course moved from Minnesota to Wisconsin back in the 1970s to race full time on the short track circuit. Having tried to secure Mike for the Annual Champions Reunions held as part of 'Fest, that finally happened as Mike was in attendance for Sunday's events. Attendance at this years Reunion was the largest ever and certainly Mike attending contributed to that. As is always the case everyone had a great time and according to Mike, "I can't believe all the drivers that are here, even those from a generation of racing before me."

The legendary Ernie Tuff was another storyline of 'Fest as he brought his record breaking 1961 Ford to the Speedway for all to see. Having the car on display during Champions Reunion, along with firing up the famous racing machine now and then had all the former drivers and onlookers in awe. To top it all off Ernie Tuff himself paced the field in the car for the Vintage race on Sunday. The car was loud in front of the field but the huge crowd on hand was even louder in voicing their approval of the cars appearance for what will probably be the last time. The last time in

that the car which Fireball Roberts drove to numerous track records at Daytona International Speedway is reportedly making it's last stop in the near future in a racing themed museum.

The Annual Oktoberfest Racing weekend and storylines are synonymous. The 47th Annual event to be held October 6-9, 2016 will certainly bring more of the same.

Here and there...Ron Lockington was back at La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway on a regular basis competing in the Outlawz Division. His return was a Championship winning one as he took his Truck to those laurels...Other Champions during the season included Steve Carlson in NASCAR Late Models as well as the tracks Chase Championship title, Nick Clements in Sportsman, Andy Moore in Thunderstox and overall Novelty events, as well as Thunderstox Dash, Brad Powell Late Model Dash Champion, Tony Leis Sportsman Dash Champ, Nate Towner in Hornets, John Eron in Street Stocks, John Clauson in the novelty Figure 8 events and Steve Bachman Sportsman Chase Champion...Caught the Impact Survival Series Enduro 300 here recently at Wausau's State Park Speedway and came away amused as usual from one of these type of events. Amused, as in seeing all the Halloween themed race cars and in the action itself which can become down right comical at times with cars scattered everywhere and drivers dodging bullets every lap. In the end the victory went to Blake Dorweiler who although two laps down at one point rallied for the big win. What I like about this type of racing, is that it's more for the common man wanting to compete. Compact cars being the choice of vehicle to race in the series, a driver can become a racer almost overnight with just a few car modifications and some safety items

implemented. It reminds of the old days when someone wanting to get in the sport could go to the junkyard and have a car ready to roll in short order. If they wrecked that car they could go back to the junkyard and find the parts to fix it! Just a fun, economical form of racing and many were involved on this day as 70 cars started the 300 lap event...

Looking back, on August 10th, 1977 it was Mike Miller winning the Moose Peterson Memorial, 25 lap Feature race at La Crosse Interstate

Speedway, West Salem, WI. Following Miller were Tom Reffner, Dick Trickle, Pete Mahlum and Jeff Stegmeyer. On May 9th, 1978 it was Mike Miller edging Tom Reffner and Dick Trickle to win the 20 lap Feature event at La Crosse Interstate Speedway. Fourth and fifth spots went to Marv Marzofka and Steve Burgess. At Daytona International Speedway, Daytona Beach, FL., 1964, it was Fireball Roberts driving the Fuel Injected 1961 Ford built by Ernie Tuff, Rushford, MN., to a new record of 170,470 MPH in the NASCAR Modified Sportsman Division. On June 1st, 1975 Tom Reffner driving his 1974 AMC Javelin



Bruce Nuttleman photo

swept the program in the Dr. Pepper 150 at La Crosse Interstate Speedway. Reffner set fast time, won the dash, the odd qualifier 50 lap feature and the event finale 50 lap main. Following Reffner in the finale were Marv Marzofka and Joe Shear.

In the quote of the column department it was Mike Miller stating how Terry Bivins instructed him he could win the 1973 National Short Track Championship at Rockford Speedway, Rockford, IL. "You could win this thing if you put new tires on." "So we were at the halfway point of the race and I listened and put four new tires on. We won the race my biggest win up to that time!"

News, notes and comments welcome to Dale P. Danielski at Starmaker Multimedia 967 10th Ave N Ste A, Onalaska, WI 54650, at 608-783-5827, 608-518-2478, or at dale@starmakermultimedia.com, www.starmakermultimedia.com

Ernie Tuff 1961 Ford on display at Champions Reunion VII.



Check out Dale's Pictures from the Past on page 15 of this issue.



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Dean & Jason Talkin' Racin'



Dean Reller

With the change in the weather, I finally think it's finally safe to say that racing is over for the year. That being said, the racing season seems to be getting a little longer every year. Back not that many years ago the racing season would wrap up on or shortly after Labor Day and that would be pretty much it for the year. However, in recent years the "Regular" or Points Season at race tracks has now extended a week or two past Labor Day, making the season just a little bit longer. Following the point races come several special events at various tracks throughout the area. Some of these events have been held for years such as Oktoberfest in LaCrosse, while others such as the P-Town Showdown in Princeton have only been around for three years.

Whether you are a fan of the dirt or pavement racing, there seems to be a special for you somewhere in your area. I'm a fan of all kinds of racing, so for me it's a matter of figuring out what fits into my schedule. These special events are a magnet for both drivers and fans as people travel a little further than they normally do to attend races. All of which is healthy

That Special Season



Scott Searcy/Cricket Prints photo

for our sport which has been dealing with lower car counts and fewer fans as the battle for the entertainment dollar seems to get greater every year. So, from an economic standpoint, these post-season specials really help our sport and I hope to see them continue in the future to help our sport financially.

For the true race fan, these specials sometimes turn into an all-star race of who's who in local racing. The home track driver who wins often and always seems to finish near the front is suddenly challenged by the top driver or drivers from other tracks. With track points being collected during most of the racing season, these drivers never get a chance to compete against each other. So suddenly at the end of year, some of the season's best races happen as these mini all-star races occur at several tracks during the latter half of September and through October. Some battles are epic, while others don't always materialize due to mechanical problems or the effects of weather, which can vary from one extreme to the other during this time. Nonetheless, the Special Season is something for the true race fan, no matter where you go.

This season I had the opportunity to announce the P-Town Showdown at the Princeton Speedway. It was thrilling to see the pits jam-packed with cars and really nice to see large crowds on both nights of the two day event. The track conditions were excellent and I felt it was some of the best racing of the year. That's not to take away from the regular season racing, but the extra cars and fans helped to make this event, even though it's relatively new, something that will be a

destination race or a circle it on your calendar race for more people in the years to come.

I also was able to attend the final day of Oktoberfest at the LaCrosse Fairgrounds Speedway. This multi-day event featured many different divisions and always seems to put on some great racing. The ARCA Midwest Tour Championship race is one of my favorite races of the year and this year's 200 lap main event went right down to the wire, making it one of the reasons I try to make it there every year.

Unfortunately, the weather in the Midwest prevents more tracks from having special events as the calendar flips to November. However, we can start looking forward to next year and not just the "Regular Season" but those special races that come after all the points are accumulated and all the Championships are decided, then that Special Season begins and that's something to really look forward to.



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Racing Nuggets



Jacklyn Daniels-Nuttleman

Oktoberfest Race Weekend was another success on many levels this year. I was pleased that carnage was kept to a minimum for most, so those who always feel the need to call the event “Wrecktoberfest” were forced to just shut up and just enjoy the racing action for once. To be blunt—we’re cramming a ton of racing into four days at La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway—so statistically, the likelihood of accidents is there.

Quite honestly, I think there were more accidents in the campground this year, than on the track. I spotted someone who shat themselves. Seriously. I was going to snap a picture of it, but decided if I ever was fool enough to drink so much that I couldn’t control my bowels, I would hope and pray that no one would document me having done that to myself. Besides, I had enough to drink to make my own faux pas. It’s true. I spent a good minute searching for the handle to flush the porta-potty one night.

If you did not enjoy a laugh, a wild story of years gone by at ‘Fest, a celebratory beverage, or jello shot at some point during Oktoberfest, you did not truly experience it. I’m thinking about creating a punch card for Oktoberfest next year, loosely based upon experiences one can (and should make a point to) indulge in during the weekend.

Obviously, the live music in the Exhibition Center on Friday and Saturday night is a place to go for rehashing the night’s events and downing some beverages, but if you’ve never checked out The Pink Flamingo on the fringe of the west end of Camper Village, then you’re missing one of the key elements of the post-race fun at Oktoberfest.

New this year to the Pink Flamingo were laser lights; not like a light saber that Darth Vader and Han Solo wield, but thin, intense beams of light that shot out over the dance floor and surrounding area. (Yes, there is a dance floor, under a tent at the Pink Flamingo.) These lasers were the cause of my first buzzed oopsie of the weekend. I actually did a kung fu sort of limbo move, when I thought I was walking into a rope that was strung across the area. Yeah, I looked like an idiot “dodging” a laser beam of light. But I played it cool and worked it into a little dance move. I’m fancy like that.

It’s good to have a plan when you start Oktoberfest Race Weekend; mind you, I’m not recommending that you have every day mapped out—rather I think you need to make notes of things or events that you definitely want to hit. (This is where my punch card idea would be golden!) I would highly suggest that you put the Pink Flamingo on that list. I’d also recommend that you take part in some of the Camper Village Games that Dean’s Satellite & Security put together—



Cornhole, Basketball Pong, and other wackiness. They were a lot of fun, and will surely provide some bragging rights going into next year.

One of the more amusing events is the Pet Costume Contest, which seems to be growing by leaps and bounds each year—both with participants, and spectators. Seriously, it’s hysterical to see animals in costumes; especially the very creative ones. There is always at least one that will leave you in stitches. This year, it was Decker Racing’s dogs. The pair of pups had on baby onesies and they resembled the man I spoke of earlier who filled his britches. Suffice it to say, I don’t think either dog was amused with the costume, but they still garnered a ton of attention and cheers.

continued on page 13

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continued from page 12

There were plenty of electric moments in the campground, as well as on the track during the four days of festivities. People are still talking about Johnny Sauter accepting the Challenge to start in the back of the ARCA Midwest Tour and charging his way up to second place, only to have to duck into the pits due to mechanical woes, before the checkered flag flew.

Sauter put on a heck of a show, and certainly added another dimension of drama to the race. It's funny how substantial prize money can raise the level of showmanship and competition; had he won—and he certainly was making a serious bid to do so, Sauter would've pocketed a total of \$9,000. Five-thousand of which was just the bonus money for electing to start dead last in the race.

Fallen leaves on the grill of many race cars caused some overheating issues for some drivers; which perhaps played a role in Sauter's problems. I had a rear-facing camera on Ty Majeski's car and when Sauter was behind him, the air vent on the nose of his car was plastered with leaves. As was Majeski's; which was ultimately a contributing factor to his engine's vapor lock on the final restart with just 10 laps to go.

There were plenty of behind-the-scenes drama situations too. Natalie Decker had a lower ball joint and a sway bar mount break on her car during practice, but was able to quickly make solid repairs by taking her car over to Chris and Craig Johnson's shop that Majeski's team operates out of in West Salem.

Probably the most dramatic comeback from a potentially perilous situation was Dave Trute, eventual champion in the Great Northern Sportsmen Series. His qualifying effort was thrown out, because he had installed a side window on his car. Something Trute felt was open for interpretation, due to the wording of the rule on windows: "Stock or Lexan windshields required, all other windows (if used) must be of Lexan."

Trute chose to use a side window, based upon his interpretation of said rule. No one really knows how fast of a time he would've laid down in qualifying, as officials called shenanigans on the side window, upon spotting it from the tower, and the timing clock was shut down before he crossed the line.

Due to officials determining the window an infraction of the rules, Trute had to start in the back of all last chance races; a significant penalty, despite the window only being used in qualifying, and yanked before any racing.

Interpretation of the rules (or the grey area) can be a contentious topic, officials need to make a statement with the punishment sometimes to appease other competitors, but it's those who think outside of the box and do their homework to find a competitive advantage that makes the sport fun for spectators. Innovation is what drives everyone to be better and make their cars faster.

Was Trute right in his decision, or were the GNSS officials right? I guess that's also open to interpretation.

But once again, the drama didn't really matter. Despite his forward progress being stymied, due to being boxed in, like the "Smokey and the Bandit" hide-the-bandit scene during his qualifying race, Trute still managed to march his way to the front of the last chance race, handily winning it by a half lap ahead of the rest of the field. He also put on a great show in the feature, posting a fourth place finish—and wrapping up the championship for the series.

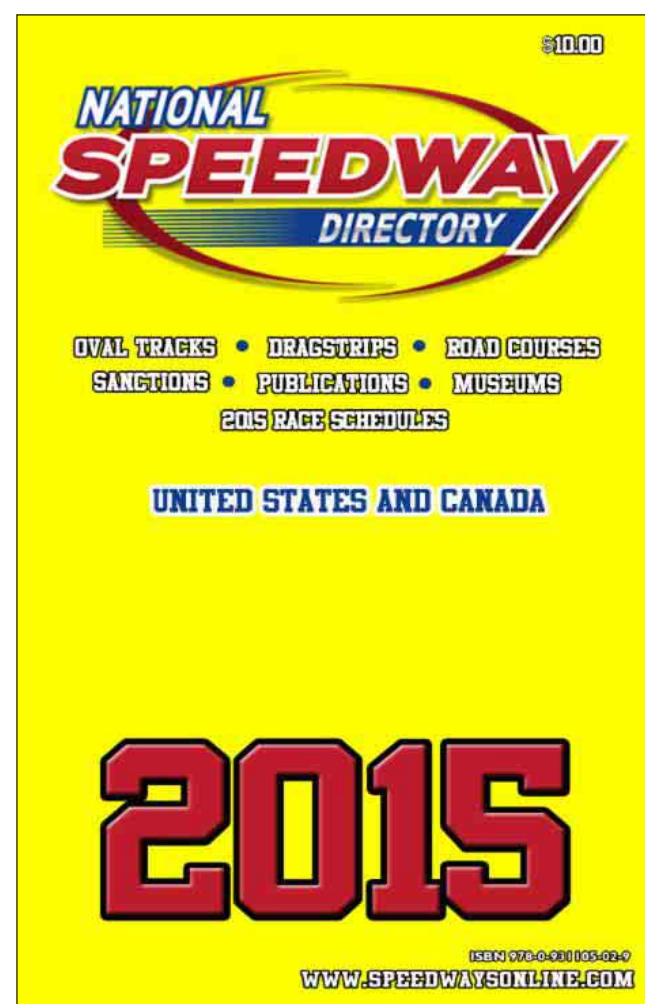
I'd be remiss if I didn't mention how stellar the weather was during Oktoberfest Race Weekend. Yes, the misting action late on Thursday night was a bit of a bummer, but it was indeed impressive that officials and teams were able to get the whole show done, despite the spitting rain.

Other than Thursday night's brief moisture, the rest of the weekend's weather—and pretty much everything else was phenomenal this year at Oktoberfest. And thanks to the little nugget in the Fan Information Guide—or "Fest Fact" as so appropriately dubbed—we now all know that Oktoberfest Race Weekend will always be the 5th weekend after Labor Day. I never realized that, and I've been going to Oktoberfest for a long time. But if you're one of those people that hate counting weekends on the calendar, just mark it down for October 6th – 9th, 2016.

That should give me plenty of time to design that little ol' "Punch Card O' Fun" for next year!



Mark Melchiori photo



Meet the New Knight

By Dan Plan

We recently caught up with the President and CEO of Johnny's Hobbies Worldwide to discuss the Oktoberfest 2015 debut of the Blue Knight Javelin driven by the one and only Knute Fastenuff or the New Knight, aka - John Gilbertson.

Johnny is a pretty low key guy, and there are a number of racers that benefit from his love from the sport. I had seen the name Johnny's Hobbies on cars for some time and was introduced to Johnny about 4

and hand lettered versus having graphics applied. This car (and Johnny) sure brought back a lot of memories for myself and many other race fans. Here's what Johnny had to say.

name as an alias before I even got in the car. I don't know if it was me, but there was some beer involved when we were talking about the name Knute Fastenuff.



Bruce Nuttleman photo

years ago. Whenever I go to Lacrosse these days, it's always a treat to talk with Johnny.

Personally, I had a blast talking with him on the phone for this interview. Our conversation of the phone lasted ten-times longer than the interview itself took. Regarding the car, it looked great on, and off the track. One of the best aspects of this vintage car was that it prepared in old-school fashion. It was painted



How did you originally get involved in short track racing?

I don't really remember who took me to my first race. It was at the old North Lacrosse Speedway. I don't know if it was a neighbor that had a driver's license that took us but that's the earliest I remember. That had to be around 1967 or 1968.

We can probably figure out how the name "New Knight" was created, but where did the name Knute Fastenuff come from?

Well, that was just being funny. We came up with that

Chris Loberg originally built this car, correct?

Chris built it and first drove the car about six or eight times in 2009 and ran really well with it.

How did the idea to make a Tom Reffner tribute car come about?

Because it was a Javelin, and I knew Chris had it for sale, so I went and bought it. I remember Tom Reffner winning so much with his Javelin. I wanted to paint it like his. It had such a nice paint job originally I just left it until this year. I wanted to honor Tom for winning the Oktoberfest race 40 years ago, so I said I'm doing it. A lot of people really liked it.

What memories do you have when Tom was racing the Javelin?

I went to the races quite regularly back then (mid 1970's). I remember the first time I saw that car. He went on the outside in turns one and two at Lacrosse, and passed two or three cars in the corner. He just went right around them and I thought man, that thing really handles.

You let Tom's wife & sons in on the secret development of the car, but it was a surprise to Tom on Sunday morning. What was Tom's reaction to seeing the car for the first time?

He was very surprised, and thought it was really neat to see the car for the first time. I drove it in the heat race, and Chris drove the car in the feature. I almost thought we were going to win it.



Bruce Nuttleman photo

Dale's Pictures from the Past



The Mike Miller 1973 National Short Track Championship winning Mustang (left) 1974 AMC Javelin driven by Tom Reffner in 1975 (right)

Thanks to our friends at Coastal181.com, our December issue will feature a book review of another book on short track racing by Father Dale Grubba.

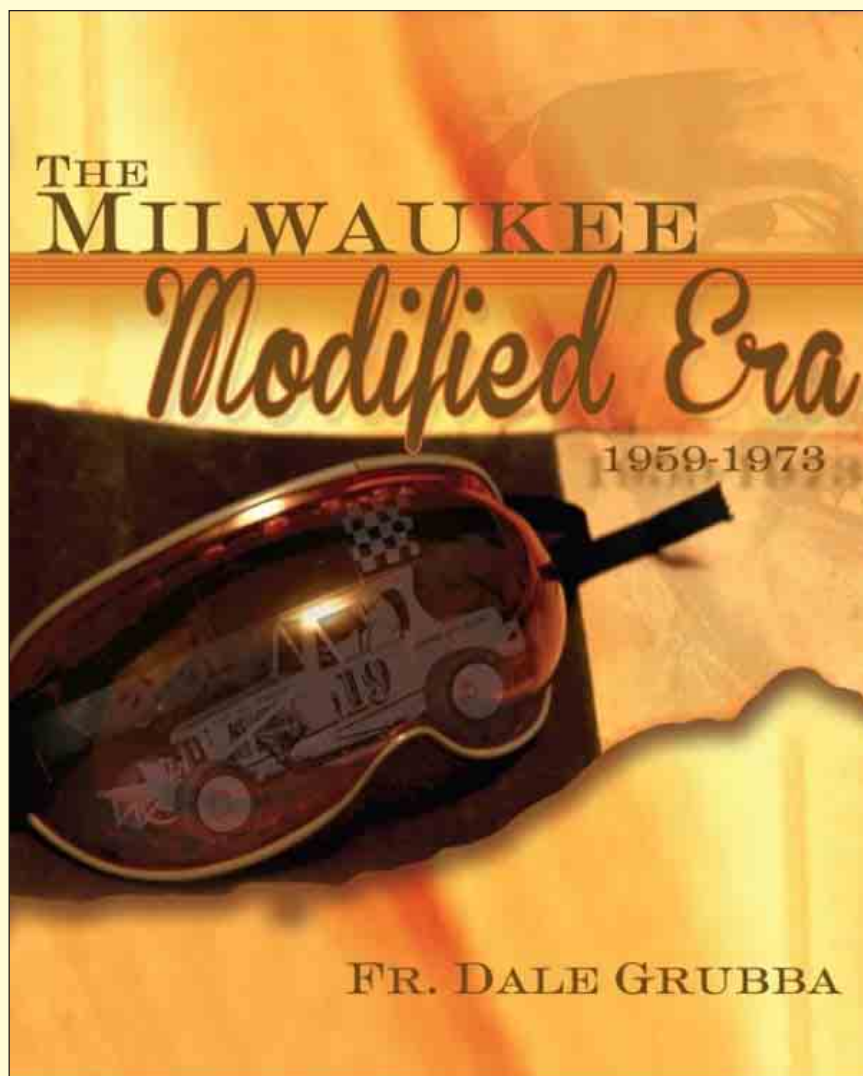




Photo Gallery



Micheal Ostdiek gets the cool sticker award for running an ARTGO decal
Bruce Nuttleman photo



Trickle tribute's aren't only on pavement as shown by this Pure Stock at Kasson
Dan Plan photo



The finish of the 50th annual National Short Track Championships
Doug Hornickel photo



Danny Richards takes the high line on his way to winning at Menomonie
Doug Zimmer photo



UMSS Traditional Sprints were added to this years Topless Nationals
Shawn Swanstrom photo



Andrew Morrissey works past Ty Majeski on his way to winning at the Dells
Jeff Blaser photo

2015 MRC Best Appearing Car Award

The Midwest Racing Connection panel of short track experts made their own competition for the best appearing car at Oktoberfest in 2015. The results ended up in a tie. The Tom Reffner replica Javelin of Johnny Gilbertson and the Alan Kulwicki tribute car of Steve Apel were deemed equally awesome.



Bruce Nuttleman photo



Dan Plan photo

Racing Returns to Dodge County Speedway in Kasson

Dodge County Speedway in Kasson, MN reopened during the 2015 season and hosted 2 shows. The Fall Brawl held in early October had a good sized crowd and nearly 100 cars on hand to finish out their season. Promotor Chris Abts has indicated plans are in the works to have a few more shows at the historic fairgrounds facility again during the 2016 racing season.



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